

# Guide to Santa Rosa, La Pampa

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## Teaching Opportunities

My primary teaching was done at *la Universidad Nacional de La Pampa* (UNLPAM) as an assistant teacher within the department of *Lenguas Extranjeras*. Having a degree in literature, I mainly worked within the various literature classes offered with professors Graciela Adámoli and Quique Basabe. Most of the students in these literature classes are in their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year of the *Profesorado en Inglés* major and have a high level of written and spoken English. The classes are relatively small, with 15-20 students. My role was usually to attend the classes dictated by the professor and assist with group work or discussions, but I did prepare and dictate various classes myself when the professor was absent so be prepared to tell the professors what you feel comfortable with.

Apart from these classes, I also assisted in several classes of *Lengua I, II, III, and IV*, basic language classes, as well as the *Introducción a la Literatura* course within the same *Profesorado en Inglés* with professors such as Mariela Borredón, Mariela Eligi, and Graciela Pascual. It would be a good idea to contact these professors at the start of your stay here, express your interest, offer your help, and coordinate your schedule with them, because you might be useful in assisting with certain parts of their curriculum and not with others so you would need to fix the dates ahead of time of what you can and cannot do so everyone is on the same page. For example, I helped Graciela Pascual with a few exercises during her class's section on Colloquial English, but due to earlier obligations I couldn't attend all the lectures.

Another good teaching resource is José María Fernandez, an English teacher that does interdisciplinary work in fields such as Economics and Agronomy. I helped him prepare some English texts for his students and presented them to his classes. I also went to a high school where he works to give a cultural talk.

You may be overwhelmed at first with meeting so many new people and taking on such a diverse course load, so I would recommend finding a central focus, a central professor you will help or course you will work in, and then building your schedule around that, offering your help in additional courses as you feel comfortable and even designing your own projects. I didn't do a lot in the way of supplementary projects, but I did give an essay-writing workshop towards the end of my stay. You may want to think of things like that you see a need for that you are capable of and comfortable with preparing. Also, be prepared for a different structure in relation to grades and the organization of classes from that of American Universities. Ask a professor to explain *el sistema de promoción* to you. Also, expect many days that are *feriado*, meaning a holiday and thus no classes, and for frequent strikes, or *paros*, to which we are unaccustomed in the US.

The university is hard to miss, it is located across from the Cathedral in the *Plaza de San Martín*, the central hub of the city. All of the classes in the department of Foreign

Languages and the department office are on the second floor. It is not a very large university, so an introductory tour with your *referente* or a professor should help you get oriented. You will also have to use the *Digital*, the central photocopying station, located on *25 de Mayo* to make copies of necessary materials. You will probably also need to use the photocopying station on the second floor of the university, depending on where the professor left the materials, but be advised that you have to order the copies ahead of time, they very rarely will make them for you on the spot. There is also a library down stairs for research purposes or personal interest, but you first have to have an identification card made up in order to use it.

You can also sit in on or participate in other classes at the university as an *alumno vocacional*, you just have to arrange it with your *referente* and the course registrar. But if you are interested, get on it quick, because I found that during the first semester, by the time I arrived in Santa Rosa, the class I was interested in taking, Argentine Literature, were already several weeks into the curriculum, and by the time I got the course materials I was lost.

In terms of opportunities outside of the university, you will be invited to many *colegios* and *institutos* around the city to give *charlas culturales* as well as English classes. There are so many of these institutes that it might be a good idea to try to visit as many as you can but to focus on coursework in one or two. Once again, once you get settled into a routine you will be better able to gauge your workload and how much you can handle. But my advice is to be proactive. If you want more classes or to participate in a certain thing or design a project, work with your *referente*, contact the necessary people, and make it happen. I found that everyone wants to see you and would appreciate your help, but they will also give you your space so if you don't make yourself available to them they may never contact you.

As to work opportunities within the community, I was introduced to INTA (*el Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria*) and a project of theirs called *Proyecto Huerta*, which is from my understanding an effort to bring more self-sufficiency to the local community in terms of food production and domestic competency. Unfortunately, due to other obligations, I was never really able to participate in this project, but I thought it was very interesting and would have liked to have been involved.

## **Housing**

Fortunately, when I arrived, my *referente* had already found me a place to live through a local *inmobiliaria*, or real-estate agency. However, it wasn't really to my liking and seemed too expensive, so she found me another place, a small *departamento* on *Juan B. Justo*. It had a separate kitchen, bathroom and bedroom and cost me 650 pesos a month, utilities included, though that rent was increased to 700 before I left. This is a great price by comparison with U.S. standards, but not great for Santa Rosa. I had friends that lived in similar places and paid 350 or much nicer places and paid 500. However, everyone told me that housing is difficult to find, especially in March when we arrive because all the other students arrive around then as well, and being American and only staying for 8 months, it would be hard to find a much lower price than that. It was much less than other Fulbrighters paid in other cities. Expect to pay a month's rent as a deposit when renting so bring cash. I was also loaned a television set so I had access to cable TV and I had internet installed for free in my apartment and the bill was usually

around 50 pesos a month or less. If you want internet service contact *Telefonica*. There are plenty of internet cafes in the city, however, and they are all relatively inexpensive, so internet is useful but not a must. My house was also close to the center, which I recommend since you will be spending so much time coming and going from the University. Also, a good heating system is very important during the cold winter months here, so make that a priority when choosing a place to live. In terms of furnishings, your apartment might come with a refrigerator, a bed, a table and some chairs but don't expect much else. I bought a futon to supplement my furniture. All my sheets, towels, blankets, and cookware were kindly loaned to me by the professors of the university.

### **Transportation**

I walked literally everywhere while I was here. I was only 8 blocks from the university, 4 from the *Laguna Don Tomas*, two from a local gym, 8 from a big grocery store. However, I was also lucky to have friends that would come by and pick me up in their cars whenever we were going somewhere farther than that. So if you are near the center, everything is within a 10 block radius and you can walk. If you want to go farther than that or save time, I would recommend getting a bike, though I never needed one. It did get very cold walking though in the winter time, from May to September (basically it was cold during my whole stay down here) but you adapt.

Buses (*colectivos*) are also available and economic, though I never used them much. Taxis are cheap and I used them to go to and from the bus terminal sometimes or when I bought a big load of groceries and didn't feel like walking. The central bus terminal is at the end of *San Martín* on *Avenida Pedro Luro*, and from there you can go anywhere in the country. I usually traveled to Buenos Aires with the companies *Dumascat* or *Chevalier*. The buses that leave at night are quicker and more direct; it takes you 7-8 hours overnight to get to Buenos Aires. If you take the bus during the day, the same trip might take you 10-12 hours. Tickets to Buenos Aires range from 75-100 pesos. There is no central schedule posted so you will need to locate the company that has routes to where you are going and inquire as to time and availability. You can also choose the type of seats: *semi cama* (reclines to 120°); *coche cama / cama ejecutivo* (reclines to 160°); or suite (reclines to 180°). Bus seats are called *butacas*.

### **Climate**

The weather was mild the first month I was here (although the mosquitoes were terrible, bring repellent), started getting cooler in late April, and then from May until basically November was very cold. I have been told that it was an exceptionally cold winter, so I don't know what this year will be like, but I would bring some warm clothes, or you can buy whatever you need when you get down here. It never snows, but you feel the cold acutely because it is very dry and dusty and windy, plus you walk a lot more than you would in the states and your apartment probably won't have central heating.

### **Necessities**

There are plenty of good places to shop in Santa Rosa so you can find anything you need here. I usually bought the bulk of my food at *el Norte*, the big grocery store nearest to me located on *Avallaneda* and *Quintana*, but for everyday things you have many local *carnicerías*, *panaderías* and *verdulerías* where you will find it more

convenient to shop. *La Anónima* is another grocery store chain. Also there is a university cafeteria located on *Falucho* where you can get a decent lunch for 5 pesos, which I did at the start of my stay, but then I started ordering my lunch from a local *brasería*, *Listo el Pollo* on *Spinetto 26*. They will deliver the food to you and it is better quality. I never dined out much here, but there are several good restaurants and cafes around the central plaza and near the bus station on *Luro*.

I took my laundry to a local *laverap*, where they charged me 10 pesos for a load and usually did the laundry overnight. Most any cosmetics or drugs you need can be found at the local pharmacies, they are plentiful, and the few times that I needed to see a doctor one of my friends usually set up a visit and it was inexpensive enough that I didn't file it with the Fulbright Health Insurance company. You will probably need to change money when you first arrive, which I found quite difficult because I had traveler's checks. There are lots of banks on *Pellegrini*, and I had to go to the Banco Francés and speak to their manager several times before they would cash my checks. There are also ATMs on that street and throughout downtown.

### **Recreation**

You'll never find yourself bored with all the work you'll find here and all the opportunities to meet people and explore. Being an athlete, the first thing I looked for was a rugby team, *CR Santa Rosa*, which served as the best introduction to Argentina and social network I could have imagined. I would recommend looking for a similar group based on your interests to at least give you some kind of support structure. If you are into sports, there are plenty of gyms in town, and a big lake, *Laguna del Parque Don Tomás*, nearby where I lived where you can run, walk, fish, play soccer, or any outdoor activity. You will also meet plenty of friends within the university, and will have access to student groups, political groups, and many other common interest groups. There are also several art museums here, a theater, cinemas, and a casino.

As to nightlife, you have several big clubs to go out to. *V8* and *Pavarotti* were the ones that I frequented, the former being more dressy and the latter being more for the younger generation. Just so you know, people usually eat around 10-12 here and don't go out until 2 or 3, sometimes staying out until 6.

A good nearby excursion is to *Parque Pedro Luro* a wildlife preserve about half an hour away where you can see flamingos, deer, and wild-boar.

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